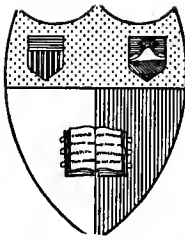


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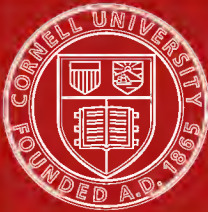
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SORTES
VERGILIANAE
OR
VERGIL AND TO-DAY

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE
DELIVERED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL
BY
D. A. SLATER, M.A.
PROFESSOR OF LATIN IN THE UNIVERSITY
ON FRIDAY MAY 27 1921

OXFORD BASIL BLACKWELL
M·DCCCC·XXII

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L'ÉNÉIDE DE NOS JOURS ¹

BY THE LEADING of a star
Came Aeneas from afar,
Sailing up the promised stream
To the kingdom of his dream.
Dust was that which had been Troy;
Dido's death had murdered joy;
By the blue Sicilian bay
In his grave Anchises lay.
Years had fled, but faithful still
Flashed the star from hill to hill,
Beck'ning to another home,
Hov'ring o'er the site of Rome.
Peace or battle—who should say?—
In the lap of Fortune lay;
Little recked he what befell,
If he bore his burden well.
So the pilgrimage he made
To receive the accolade;
So, the runes of Fate to spell,
He descended into hell.
Knightly sword and steadfast soul—
Only these could gain the goal;
Self might perish,—if the race
Won and wore the pride of place.

Thus the Mantuan said, and thus
Says Aeneas unto us,
Transubstantiating still
Fickle heart and wayward will.

D. A. S.

¹Reprinted, by permission, from the Westminster Gazette.

SORTES VERGILIANAE

WHEN, in process of time, a community like ours has the misfortune to lose the services of a very learned man, a captain of research,¹ and to enlist in his stead one whose chief claim to consideration, if claim he has, rests upon the fact that the subject he professes has been to him not merely a life-long study but also a life-long inspiration and delight, and that he believes with all his heart in the value of Latin for to-day,—common sense would seem to dictate that the ‘transient and embarrassed’ recruit in question, on being called up to deliver the lecture which the custom of the country requires from a newcomer, should not attempt to make any fresh contribution to knowledge² but try rather to re-read an old message in the light of recent and current events, appeal to some classic whose name has become a household word, some master-spirit of literature, and ask what he stands for in modern life. What is there about his work that will, in Bacon’s phrase, ‘come home to our own business and bosom’? What ideals does he set before us? What is the secret of his immortality?

Such a master-spirit is Vergil, whom to have known and loved is in itself a liberal education; whose voice—after nineteen centuries—has lost nothing of its ancient resonance and perennial charm; whose poems are still an oracle (for that is of course the meaning of the term *Sortes Vergilianae*) and not only an oracle but a fruitful and inspiring oracle to the community as well as to the individual of to-day.

¹Dr Postgate.

²My paper is under obvious obligations, which I gratefully acknowledge, in particular to two comparatively recent Studies,—*Vergil and Tennyson*, by the President of Magdalen, and *Roma Felix*, by the Reverend Cyril Martindale.

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To the genius and the greatness of the spell-binder no testimony is needed. If it were, from among the 'cloud of witnesses' we might be tempted to cite two—Burke for his words and Tennyson for his works and his example. Tennyson, who has himself been styled our English Vergil; who was from first to last a worshipper at the shrine; who in his student-days at Cambridge had to be called to order by his teacher (Whewell the logician was the man, and the scene a lecture-room in Trinity) for reading Vergil 'under the rose,' when his mind should have been concentrated on the charms of the syllogism; and who, fifty or sixty years on, after he had written 'by request of the Mantuans' that Ode to *Roman* Vergil which we all know (or should know) by heart, with its 'ocean-roll of rhythm' and its *confessio fidei*:

'I salute thee, Mantovano,
I that loved thee since my day began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure
Ever moulded by the lips of man;'

—who, I say, long years afterwards, when he was laid to rest in the Abbey, had placed upon his coffin for his own

'Golden Branch amid the Shadows'

a wreath of laurel from Vergil's grave.

This Tennyson should be one witness and the other should be Burke, of whom it is related that he kept always within reach a well-worn copy of Vergil—of Vergil, not one of the ninety-and-nine translations of Vergil;—Burke with his reminder that 'if ever we should find ourselves disposed not to admire those writers and artists—Vergil and Livy, for instance, Raphael and Michael Angelo—whom all the learned had admired, not to follow our own fancies, but to study them until we know how and what we ought to admire: and if we cannot arrive at this union of admiration with knowledge, rather to believe that we are dull than that the rest of the world has been imposed upon.'

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Thirty years ago, in the Gallery above the Bodleian at Oxford, was still shewn (I remember) the edition of Vergil in which Charles the First, on his visit to the Library, when persuaded to consult the *Sortes Vergilianaë*, opened at that terrible passage in the Fourth *Aeneid*¹ the curse of Dido on Aeneas, which with extraordinary precision rehearsed and foreshadowed the tragedy of his own fate. The loss of his throne, the separation from his children, the death of Strafford, his own lamentable end,—nothing is left out. You remember the lines and the poignant conclusion:

‘Nec cum se sub leges pacis iniquae
Tradiderit, regno aut optata luce fruatur,
Sed cadat ante diem mediaque inhumatus harena.’

Life is so full of strange and startling coincidences that there is no need for us to hold our breath in wonder at the story, or to see in this curious dispensation mysterious testimony to the uncanny power of ‘Vergil the sorcerer.’ Had the War taught us nothing else, it would at least have taught us once and for all never to forget the hard realities that stand half-concealed and half-revealed behind language—the intimate and indivisible connexion between real literature and real life. ‘Literature,’ it has been said,² ‘classical literature, is a rehearsal of the whole drama of life, from the cradle to the grave,’ and the adoption from the time of Hadrian³ onwards, that is to say from the beginning of the second century A.D., of Vergil as an oracle was simply and solely the tribute of the Roman world to the range and power of Vergil’s works, which may fairly and without exaggeration be characterized as the pagan Bible.

Ever since the beginning of the Christian era, when from time to time great issues, national or personal, have hung

¹*Aen.* iv, 615-21.

²Mr T. W. Dunn in *The Times Educational Supplement*, March, 1917.

³Spartianus, *Hadr. Vita.*

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trembling in the balance, quaking hearts have set anxious fingers turning up in the pages of Holy Writ some text to yield in advance foreknowledge and comfort. That Vergil and perhaps Vergil alone besides the Bible should have been chosen for this purpose is after all only a striking recognition and confirmation of the prestige the poet won and held in the times of momentous crisis at which he lived and wrote, an austere figure, the Maiden of Naples—so his contemporaries called him—of whom it might be said as it was of Milton, ‘the Lady of Christ’s,’ that

‘His soul was like a star and dwelt apart’;

a poet whose early work, the Messianic Eclogue, long ranked with Isaiah as a prophecy, a conscious or unconscious prophecy, of the coming of Christ, repeated later in the ‘unto us’ of the Hercules myth in *Aeneid* VIII,¹

‘Attulit et nobis aliquando optantibus aetas
Auxilium adventumque dei’;

whose epic, the *Aeneid*, was anticipated by Propertius, spokesman of Rome, in the memorable phrase, ‘Nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade’—‘a greater than Homer is here’; whose fame as the Evangelist or the Shakespeare of Italy was by the year 79 A.D. so well established not only among the intellectuals, ‘the Princes of Parnassus,’ but among the rank and file of citizens also, that while Statius² speaks of him in language of the same devout homage that in later days Milton was to dedicate to the memory of Shakespeare, it was in a half-line of Vergil scratched incomplete upon the wall at his side, that as the shadow and the silence of death descended, in the great eruption of Vesuvius, on Herculaneum and Pompeii, the Roman sentry, dying at his post, took leave of the world.

Much, but not too much, has been written and said about the ‘natural magic’ of Vergil’s half-lines, those tiny ‘jets’ of

¹ *Aen.* viii, 200 f.

² *Theb.* xii, 816 sq.; *Silv.* iv, 4, 53 ff., 7, 25; v, 3, 214.

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incomparable speech in which, ever and anon, he gives utterance to the great thoughts, the 'eternal verities' with which we tend to associate his work; 'his single words and phrases, his pathetic half-lines, with their sad earnestness and vivid exactness, giving utterance as the voice of Nature herself to that pain and weariness, yet hope of better things which is the experience of her children in every time.'¹ *Sic vos non vobis*—of the self-sacrifice in nature; *stat sua cuique dies*—'each hath his day appointed, each his deed'; *dis aliter visum*—'God's ways are not as our ways'; *unum pro multis dabitur caput*—'one life in atonement for many.' Some will remember how Mrs Humphry Ward² has analysed one of these half-lines, the famous *sunt lacrimae rerum*, the pity that Aeneas found at Carthage for Priam and 'the tale of Troy Divine'; how she shows the 'universality' of the thought, arguing that the tears are tears 'not so much for' [Priam] 'as for all griefs!—for this duped, tortured, struggling life of ours—for the *mortalia*' (what our liturgy calls 'the changes and chances of this mortal life') 'which grip all hearts, which none escape—pain and separation and remorse, hopes deceived, and promise mocked, decadence in ourselves, change in others and that iron gentleness of death which closes all.'

Much has been written on these 'iacula prudentium' from what I would venture to call the Vergilian Breviary; but perhaps nothing is more significant than the fact that time and again they have been chosen as the *tesserae*, the watch-words, the mottoes of great schools and great institutions.

'One brief hour may yet inspire an aeon,
One great thought may still cement an host.'

Apart from the 'Lest we forget' of Liverpool's 'Deus nobis haec otia fecit,' there is the motto of Harrow, 'Stet Fortuna

¹ Newman, *Grammar of Assent*. The passage cannot be repeated or reproduced too often.

² *Fenwick's Career*, cap. x *init*. Marie Antoinette stands for Priam in her context.

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Domus!' The prosperity of the House—may it always be our bulwark! The motto of the Clan Macmillan, 'Miseris succurrere disco,' My task—the succour of the oppressed.¹ The motto of the old Bath College, 'Possunt, quia posse videntur.' They can,—because they think they can. The motto of Clifton College, Earl Haig's old school—'Spiritus intus alit,' 'the soul of the place—the life-blood of us all.' The creativeword—the master phrase—the soul of a community. 'C'est l'âme qui gagne la bataille,' writes Marshal Foch. If he is right (and surely he is), how many battles has not Vergil won!

These four instances taken at random may serve to clinch the point. More recent and perhaps more striking is the recognition in the name and style of our national Order of Merit—one of the proudest tributes the nation has to bestow for service and self-sacrifice—the recognition I say of the master mind of Vergil, who in a central saying in the *Aeneid* bestows the palm in Elysium on those souls who by service, by Merit (English has borrowed even the word), have earned renown and made men 'keep their memory green':

'Quique sui memores aliquos fecere merendo.'²

Striking *sortes* or oracles in the strict sense of the word might easily be multiplied from many sources. The speaker would prefer to give two or three from his own personal experience.—In August 1914, in the week of the German rush for Paris, when von Kluck was trying desperately to 'hack his way through'; when day by day in the *Times*' diagram the black line of the hostile advance was slipping nearer and nearer to its objective; when all were anxious and in some quarters it was thought that the fall of Paris was only a matter of days;—a scholar turned, not unnaturally, to his Vergil for light. What said the Oracle? The *sors* was from the Sixth *Aeneid*, and the words ran thus:

¹Edgar's phrase in *Lear*—'Pregnant to good pity.'

²*Aen.* vi, 664.

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‘Quos super atra silex iam iam lapsura cadentique
Imminet assimilis. Lucent genialibus altis
Aurea fulcra toris epulaeque ante ora paratae
Regifico luxu’

(There you have the lure—and the menace. Then the *sors* and consolation)

‘*Furiarum maxima iuxta
Accubat et manibus prohibet contingere mensas.*’¹

The Queen of the Avengers keeps guard between. Her hand thrusts away the spoiler from the feast. What modern pen could have portrayed with the same terseness and power that tremendous and heart-shaking crisis? That the words turned up at random thus are a reminiscence or echo of the passage in Pindar,²

ἔπειδῆ τὸν ὑπὲρ κεφαλᾶς
γε Τάντάλου λίθον παρά τις ἔτρεψεν ἄμμι θεός,
ἀτόλματον Ἑλλάδι μόχθον,

which compares the Persian invasion of Greece to the stone of Tantalus,—ever threatening avalanche-like to fall but never quite ‘crashing’ or crushing its objective—seems on reflection only to give further pregnancy and point to the *sors Vergiliana*.

A year passed and one atom, a ‘classical’ atom, ‘in the sounding labour-house vast’ of a London vexed and harassed with the unsolicited attentions, nightly renewed, of the ubiquitous and objectionable Zeppelin, turned yet again to Vergil for comfort. And pat fell not the bomb but the anodyne. The *sors* was from *Aeneid* IX, the description of the the wolf, ‘the prowling wolf,’—so Milton³,—

¹*Aen.* vi, 602-606. The opening words recall Tennyson’s *Revenge*: ‘But while now the great San Philip hung above us like a cloud, Whence the thunderbolt shall fall long and loud’: and the last two verses are staged by Shakespeare in the *Tempest*, Act iii, scene 3.

²*Isthmian Odes*, vii (viii), 9 ff. ‘Inasmuch as some God hath put away from us the Tantalos-stone that hung above our heads, a curse intolerable to Hellas.’—Ernest Myers. ³*P.L.*, iv, 183 ff.

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‘Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey
Watching where shepherds pen their flocks at eve,
In hurdled cotes amid the field secure’ . . .

Yes, but whereas Milton’s wolf

‘Leaps o’er the fence with ease into the fold,’
in Vergil¹ the beast would prey but the flock ‘take covert’
and the raider is foiled.

‘Ac veluti pleno lupus insidiatus ovili
Cum fremit ad caulas, ventos perpressus et imbris,
Nocte super media, tuti sub matribus agni
Balatum exercent: ille asper et improbus ira
SÆVIT IN ABSENTIS’—

‘*sævit in absentis!*’ voids his spleen (his ‘frightfulness’) in
vain on a foe beyond his reach . . .

‘Poets that lasting marble seek
Must carve in Latin or in Greek’ . . .

Ransack all literature and will you find in any language
another three words to sum up so vividly and completely
the Zeppelin offensive, its character and its result?

Curiously apt was a third *sors* on the attempt to force the
Dardanelles, a line from *Aeneid IX*² with the neighbouring
reference to the four ‘capitalships’ Aeneas lost, the set-back
to his hopes and the joyless reflection: ‘Hic primum For-
tuna fidem mutata novavit’; and a fourth on the Czar and
the Revolution in Russia, the lines on the fall of Priam in
Aeneid II.³

‘Iacet ingens litore truncus
Avolsumque umeris caput et sine nomine corpus’:

‘But yesterday the word of Cæsar might
Have stood against the world: now lies he there,
And none so poor to do him reverence’;

¹*Aen. ix*, 59 *sq.*

²*Aen. v*, 604 and 639. ³*Aen. ii*, 557f.

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and the late yet fateful assurance, in 1918, of the collapse of Bulgaria and the beginning of the end:

‘Via prima salutis

(Quod minime reris) Graia pandetur ab urbe,¹

the highroad to safety, the gate to peace, little though you think it, an enemy city shall first unbar.

But the War had begun on a Vergilian note, with a *sors Vergiliana* spontaneously chosen and taken up with a zest by the nation as a whole. Who does not remember the burden of the song with which the light-hearted Incorrigibles embarked on the quest?

‘It’s a long, long way to Tipperary:

It’s a long way to go.’

And what Latinist who loves his Vergil did not recognise on the instant an almost word-for-word translation of the counsel given by Helenus² to Aeneas when he thought, ‘good easy man,’ he too at the beginning of his great war, that on the threshold of the adventure stood success?

‘Principio Italiam

[Italy, Hesperia, the Westland was his Tipperary]

quam tu *iam* rere propinquam

(Vicinosque, ignare, paras invadere portus)

LONGA PROCVL LONGIS VIA DIVIDIT INVIA TERRIS’;

‘Tipperary’ or ‘Paradise Won’ (some may stumble at the word but ‘Paradise’ it is, and Paradise not lost, but won). That is the burden of the Aeneid. All life is to Vergil a quest, an adventure, a crusade; a struggle against odds and a hard struggle: but a struggle worth winning. What has he to tell us of the quest? What of its aim and its significance? Why are these *sortes Vergilianae* not a ‘back number’ but a ‘live wire,’ ‘a priceless asset’?

The answer is to be sought and found in Vergil’s Life and Times, as interpreted and embodied in his poetry; in the parallel between those days and these.

¹*Aen.* vi, 96 f.

²*Aen.* iii, 381 ff.

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Matthew Arnold, whom, no less than his brother-in-arms, Arthur Hugh Clough, we may fairly claim as a Liverpool poet, a Vergilian through-and-through, whose *Rugby Chapel* is an Anglo-Saxon *Aeneid* in epitome—Matthew Arnold once said, we are told, that his poems were ‘a cry of pain.’ Mrs Sellar in her *Reminiscences* relates that Burns wrote his great song of liberty, ‘Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled,’ in a fierce thunderstorm battling with the tempest on the road to Newton-Stewart, near Loch Ken. So, too, Vergil’s music was wrung from him by a storm, a storm not of Nature but of State. It is a common-place of the text books that ‘Poetry is a criticism and an interpretation of life,’ not of Greek life or of Roman life or of English life, but of life—the life of the race; and not for one generation only but for all time (that is what they mean when they call the Classics the Humanities). If we may add that each poet who matters and Vergil among the rest brings something of his own into the common stock, we might make bold to say that Vergil’s special contribution to the *ἔρανος* is a robust idealism. His theme is the service of man. His ideal is success, cost what it may, in that service. Of the two lines¹ in which, according to tradition, Vergil ‘unlocked his heart,’ one is the *sors* which Apollo by the mouth of the Sibyl gives to Aeneas (and through Aeneas to Rome *and to us*) in the temple of Cumae at the climax of his pilgrimage: ‘Tu ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito!’ ‘Do not you go down before misfortune! the harder Fate hits, the more daring be your onset!’ That is the mainspring of his story and his ethics. Iron endurance—indomitable pluck. It is one of Lord Fisher’s three ‘nevers’ (Never argue. Never apologise. *Never give in*). It is the ‘Vaincre. Vaincre—n’importe à quel prix. Vaincre, non pour dominer mais pour être libre’ of that redoubtable Vergilian, Marshal Foch, tempered all through by a ‘passion for perfection’—the ‘divine despair’ or divine discontent, that is for ever (like the souls in the underworld

¹ *Aen.* v, 710; vi, 95.

whom Aeneas saw waiting and wearying for their entry into rest) stretching out hands of passionate longing for the further shore: 'Tendebantque manus ripæ ulterioris amore.'¹ That is the pith and marrow of Vergil's teaching to the New Age; his rule for Peace as well as for War, for all life and for every man. It is the *sors Vergiliana* par excellence. It is the Pauline note, ἔΠΕΚΤΕΙΝΟΜΕΝΟΣ. It explains the beautiful old legend how Saint Paul on his way to Rome touched at Naples and when told Vergil's story and taken to see Vergil's grave recognized in the poet a kindred spirit and wept that he had come too late to baptize him as a convert to the true religion.

More than most men, Vergil in his generation had 'learnt in suffering what he taught in song.' His world was the world that immediately preceded the Christian era; a world groaning and travailing with a new birth; faint from the period of gestation; sick with long years of war at home and abroad; fresh from the fight for existence against Antony and the East; out of which—the last Act in the great drama of the Republic—was to emerge, so men thought, a colossal transformation scene. The cycle of war and tribulation was over. The cycle of peace and progress was to come.

'The world's great age begins anew.
The golden years return.'

The air was on fire with talk of a Deliverer, and that promised Deliverer none other than the Victor of Actium, the Saviour of Rome, the young Augustus.

'Hic vir, hic est tibi quem promitti saepius audis,
Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet
Saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arva
Saturno quondam' . . .²

And here comes in a personal touch; for, unless recent speculation and research are at fault, this Deliverer was not

¹*Aen.* vi, 314.

²*Aen.* vi, 791 ff.

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only (as we knew before) the friend but the old friend—almost the ‘school friend’—of the poet.¹

Vergil's childhood, boyhood and youth had felt the stress and the strain. His manhood caught up and passed on the new hope, the ‘Sibylline’ promise that here at last was the ‘peace, unity and concord’ prophesied by the seers of the past. To him, however, it is to be a spiritual regeneration; it is less the surroundings than the men who are to be transfigured; and so instead of propounding his faith in terms of politics and fact, he wraps truth in fiction² to spread as a legend and a vision through the medium of his poetry.

The blossoms of the *Eclogues*, his first garland of song, are grouped round one poem, the immortal rose of childhood, the Messianic Eclogue, the central figure of which is the figure of a new-born babe, a laughing babe, brought to the birth by the travail of the whole world, and destined to lead that world on into the land of promise. The message is transmitted in a language and a similitude that must strike home to every heart.

In the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*, the achievements of his prime,—at their face value no more than a treatise on farming and a conventional epic,—he sings *first* the Reconstruction of Italy, the old agricultural Italy, ‘Saturnian’ Italy—in its connotation not unlike the ‘merrie’ England of the Elizabethans—and *then* the re-birth and re-constitution of the State—*ex Troia Roma*; ‘Ilion falling, Rome arising.’ In the Fourth *Georgic* (his ‘fable of the Bees’) the community, in the *Aeneid* the individual, the good citizen personified, the ‘Unknown Warrior,’ is the hero of the piece. It is an epic of ‘God’s best gift to man’—an epic of the Day’s Work.

Not for nothing is *HONVS*, the old Latin word for ‘burden,’ so closely bound up with *HONOS*, the Latin word for ‘honour,’ ‘preferment,’ that Latin writers play on the

¹ Class. Rev. 18, 119-122. Note on the *Culex* by Dr Warde Fowler, with a p.s. by ‘R.S.C.’

² ‘Obscuris vera involvens.’—*Aen.* vi, init.

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resemblance, in the spirit of the modern motto, *Onerari est honorari*.¹ On Rome's oldest and most cherished monuments of the past, the Tombs of the Scipios, we read the record only of offices served and burdens borne:—'Consol, censor, aedilis hic fuit apud vos.' No vain flourish of rhetoric there; only the facts,—'facta non verba.' 'L'homme c'est rien—l'œuvre c'est tout.'

The Pilgrim whose Progress is recounted in the *Aeneid*, the 'traveller between life and death' whose career is held up to all as a pattern and an example, bearing on his shoulders—not in a mere metaphor, for the prophetic story is outlined on his shield—the doom and destiny of his descendants: 'Attollens umero famamque et fata nepotum'²—is nominally Aeneas, but, just as England, in the words of the old criticism, is the heroine of the historical plays of Shakespeare, so, it has been said, 'the hero of the *Aeneid* is Rome,' *Roma aeterna*, the daughter of Troy and heir to Troy's great record, with roots striking deep into the past and branches reaching out far into the future. The soul of Troy survives in Aeneas and his company. 'I am sure I can save this country, and nobody else can,' said Pitt at a crisis of the Napoleonic Wars,—*potest,—quia posse videtur*. And similarly Aeneas—'data fata secutus'³—secure in the star of his house, the halo that while Troy was burning hovered over the head of his son Ascanius—Aeneas, listening to the voice of promise as Joan of Arc (*Saint Joan*) to her 'voices,' sets out on his pilgrimage, an austere pilgrimage,

'To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield,'

a conscript, and a conscript for life, but with faith in his mission and in himself; a Hamlet, but a Hamlet not unequal to his task. And in this spirit of complete self-subordination, to heaven, to country and to family, he finds if not happiness

¹ cf. *e.c.* Liv. xxii, 30, 'Plebiscitum, quo oneratus magis quam honoratus sum, primus antiquo abrogoque.'

² *Aen.* viii, 731. ³ *Aen.* i, 382.

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at least content. His philosophy is the philosophy of Horace and of Hastings, 'a mind that, happen what may, never loses poise or balance'—'Mens aequa in arduis.' Like Richard the Second in the play he says in effect

'I am sworn brother, sweet,
To grim necessity'
'Italiam non sponte sequor.'

Here is no epic of Free-Will. The call is on him—he can no other—to follow up, to push his stone, to turn his wheel, but *not* like Sisyphus and Ixion in vain. He is a type and a model for Rome and for Augustus in the days of Reconstruction:

'[His] shoulders held the sky suspended;
[He] stood, and [Troy's] foundations stay.'

You remember the great prologue: how he came, 'Fate's refugee,' to Italy and the Lavinian fields, after sore buffeting at the decree of Heaven, from years of suffering on sea and land, in peace and war—

'dum conderet urbem
Inferretque deos Latio'

—so he might but found his city and bring the worship of his gods to Latium. Yes, and he achieved the task. A super-Orpheus, he never looked back.

This idea of the service of man—'many men through many years each working in his own country'—the theme of the *Aeneid*, the call of the Race, is as old as humanity itself. It is the Labours of Hercules the Pathfinder. It is the Agony of Prometheus the Martyr—matched, each of them, against the enemy of man and of human progress in that duel, that eternal duel, between the forces of Good and Evil, which began in the Garden of Eden and will end only with the Last Trump. It is an Act, and an essential Act, in the Tragedy of Evolution. The Juno of the *Aeneid* is the Zeus of the *Prometheus Vincit* and the Hera of the Hercules myth. Prometheus and Hercules come alive in Aeneas of Troy, who

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like them dares the great ordeal and goes down, quick, into the Underworld, to help and to redeem the people of whom he is the shepherd. 'It was for the people'—says the hero of 'The Knife and the Naked Chalk'—'the sheep are the people.' . . . 'It was not right that The Beast should master man. *What else could I have done?*' But this time the story is re-told in the image of man as a unit, a loyal unit, in a typical family (and the family was itself the unit of Roman life throughout Rome's history) in migration and transition from Troy of the past, which typifies, dimly, the old régime broken up and abandoned after Actium, the 'great war' of the day, to Rome of the present and the future, *Roma aeterna*, to Rome and Italy, the land of promise ('debita tellus'), which the Pilgrims had set out to seek and which the new era is to see inaugurated,—the State which it is the destiny of Aeneas, a shadowy Augustus, to found and enthrone as queen of the world; the goal of the adventure, the ark of civilization; to be handed down by dint of Tennyson's

'Something higher, something nobler, all for each
and each for all,'

secure from generation to generation, like the Luck of the House in the Commonwealth of the Bees:

'Ergo *ipsas* quamvis angusti terminus aevi
Excipiat (neque enim plus septima ducitur aestas),
At *genus* immortale manet, multosque per annos
Stat Fortuna domus, et avi numerantur avorum';¹

'Therefore, though each a life of narrow span,
Ne'er stretched to summers more than seven, befalls,
Yet deathless doth the race endure, and still
Perennial stands the fortune of their line,
From grandsire unto grandsire backward told';²

¹G. iv, 206-209, perhaps the finest lines in a magnificent passage (149-228), which yet deserves the closest study as a whole.

²Mr James Rhoades.

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‘For so the ark be brought to Zion, who
Heeds how they perished or were paid, who bore it?
For so the shrine abide, what shame—what pride—
If [they] the priests, were bound or crowned before it?’¹

Vergil’s religion, if we are to take his own word or indication for it, is the religion of Pythagoras, with the old belief in the cycle of time, which at every turn of the wheel brings back to earth fresh souls from the past, to carry on the government and advancement of the race, ‘souls ascending and descending the ladder’ according as they do well or ill from generation to generation, ‘the men who help and the men who hinder,’ some mounting from strength to strength, others dropping ever downwards, lower and lower, if they fail themselves and their country. ‘Just and sure is the wheel, swerving not a hair’: the struggle is always against odds, always failing of complete success, and yet, as often, desperately and perforce renewed, with the old ideal still to lead us ‘on, and always on.’ Here is an *ἔρανος*, a love-feast, to which each feeblest member of the community brings, in the spirit of Aeneas and of the Bees, his particle of service and self-sacrifice, struggling on, ‘faint yet pursuing,’ ‘n’importe à quel prix,’ ‘non sibi sed toti,’ towards the common goal.

What but struggle is the heart of the allegory and of life? What else was the hall-mark of Rome?

‘Sic fortis Etruria crevit,
Scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma.’²

Clearly to Vergil, as to Marcus Aurelius, ‘life was more of a wrestling match than a dance.’ The farmer and his bulls on the land, pitted against nature and the powers of nature. The bees in the hive contending against drones and vampires. Aeneas and his men on pilgrimage to found their city in defiance of Juno and her Acheron;³ and for each his *sors*

¹ Mr Kipling, ‘The Proconsuls’; *Times*, 22 July 1905.

² *G.* ii, 533 f. ³ *Aen.* vii, 311.

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in that vital and essential co-operation, which Vergil is out to preach and to promote. 'Toil,' he says, 'unconscionable toil,'¹ is the real world-conqueror. It needs shortage and stress to speed up the machine:

'Labor omnia vincit
Improbus et duris urgens in rebus egestas.'

And again

'Depresso incipiat iam tum mihi taurus aratro
Ingemere, et sulco attritus splendescere vomer.'

'The ox is yoked and he must plough,' as Napoleon told his doctors when they ordered him a 'rest-cure' on campaign. Yes, plough (says Vergil) till the plough-share shines like silver in the furrow. To Aeneas it is the 'follow up!' of the Harrow song:

'Perge modo et, qua te ducit via, dirige gressum.'

'Vade age et ingentem FACTIS fer ad æthera Troiam;'

and, in an aside, by the way, for the 'idle rich' and the 'canny' labourer is the pillory and the stocks of their *sors* also. They are the 'barren darnel' and the 'wild oats' that spring up in the fields untilled and lord it, play the tyrant, domineer over the realms of golden opportunity:

'Interque nitentia culta
Infelix lolium et steriles dominantur avenae.'

The chief praise is to the Bees in his 'Fable of the Bees,' who always (he tells us) rise to the height of a great emergency, and when the need is sternest and the community hardest hit by loss and devastation 'toil, and toil terribly,' with cumulative effort and collective conscience—with the 'diversity of gifts' and the 'unity of spirit' which our Navy League after their example has taken for its motto—'toil, and toil terribly,' till the loss is made good:

'Quo magis exhaustae fuerint, hoc acrius omnes

Incumbent generis lapsi sarcire ruinas,

Complebuntque foros et floribus horrea textent.'

¹'wicked' toil. *G.* i, 145 f.

²*G.* i, 145.

³*Aen.* i, 401.

⁴*Aen.* iii, 461.

⁵*G.* iv, 140 ff.

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‘The more impoverished they, the keenlier all
To mend the fallen fortunes of their race,
Will nerve them, fill the cells up, tier on tier,
And weave their granaries from the rifled flowers.’¹

No ‘ca’ canny, no ‘sinn fein’ there; all are to ‘get busy’ and do their duty, not for themselves alone but for the race. For life, the poet reminds us, never stands still. It is like a river, on which we are all compelled to row; a river with a fierce current, that it taxes every muscle to master. Delay and interruption spell ruin and disaster:

‘Sic omnia fatis
In peius ruere ac retro sublapsa referri,
Non aliter quam qui adverso vix flumine lembum
Remigiis subigit, si bracchia forte remisit
Atque illum in praeceps prono rapit alveus amni.’²

‘Never will [man] be his own master, nor yet ever any man’s. He will get half he gives, and givet twice what he gets, till his life’s last breath; and if he lays aside his load before he draws that last breath, all his work will go for naught.’³ There, in the words of a great modern writer, is life according to Vergil; and there, surely, is an ‘oracle’ for to-day.

The ideas and qualities which Vergil throws upon the screen in the shifting pageant of his great epic are elemental ideas and qualities, the things that matter in the life of the individual and of the community—continuity, courage, patriotism, persistency, tradition; the splendid heroism and self-sacrifice of youth, of a Pallas, a Lausus, a Euryalus; the iron determination and inflexible principles of manhood and age, of an Aeneas, a Tarchon, an Evander. He is too wise to pretend that the yearnings and aspirations he conjures up can ever find their full fruition here and now.

That passion which possesses only the great masters of Art and of Science, the passion for perfection, which led Vergil

¹ Mr James Rhoades. ² G. i, 199 ff.

³ Mr Kipling, *Rewards and Fairies*.

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himself as he lay dying to bid his friends burn the *Aeneid*, and Lord Kelvin, a kindred spirit, at the end of his career to characterize his own life-work as failure,¹ that passion glows and vibrates in the characters as well as in the harmonies of the poem:

‘Aut pugnam aut aliquid iamdudum invadere magnum,
Mens agitat mihi, nec placida contenta quiete est.’²

But if hope inspired the Fourth *Eclogue* with its anticipation of the ‘Madonna and Child’ of Raphael and his great contemporaries, with all that symbolism of dawn and spring, a re-incarnation, a new age,

‘The soul that rises with us, our life’s star,’

yet the *Aeneid* ends with the passing of a heroic soul, a rebel soul it is true but a heroic soul, still aspiring, still unsatisfied, with a sigh, *cum gemitu*, to the hereafter:

‘And with a moan his spirit passed, disdainful, to
the shades’:³

ends with the admission that for Everyman the quest *is* (and must be) the reward.

The triumph of Aeneas is for the moment eclipsed by the tragedy of Turnus. ‘It isn’t life that matters,’ he seems to say, with Age and Experience, in Mr Walpole’s *Fortitude*, ‘it is the courage that you bring to it.’ Throughout we are struggling on towards a goal that eludes and must elude us still; ‘fugientis prendimus oras Italiae’; a radiance, an ideal;

¹‘One word characterises the most strenuous of the efforts for the advancement of science that I have made perseveringly for fifty-five years: that word is failure. I know no more of electric and magnetic force, or of the relation between ether, electricity and ponderable matter, or of chemical affinity, than I knew or tried to teach my class-students in my first session as Professor.’

Lord Kelvin at his Jubilee (Glasgow, 1896).

²*Aen.* ix, 186 f.

³*Aen.* xii, 951; the translation is Mr Garrod’s.

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‘The light that never was on sea or land,
The consecration and the poet’s dream;
‘Per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum
Tendimus in Latium’;—
‘On, to the bound of the waste,
On to the City of God.’

That in feeble outline is the teaching of Vergil; what Mr H. G. Wells and the author of *Erewhon* contemptuously dismiss, the one as ‘Tennysonianism’ and the other as ‘mere Rococo,’ but what led Bacon to describe Vergil as ‘the chastest poet and the royalest that to the memory of man is known,’ and the elder Scaliger, as cited by Sir Philip Sidney, to declare that ‘no Philosopher’s precepts can sooner make you an honest man than the reading of Virgil.’ ‘Great words in the memory furnish’ (it has been said) ‘one of the best hopes for great aspirations in life.’ Happy the man who goes through life with *sortes Vergilianae* ringing in his mind, eternal verities in immortal verse. They will be to him so many talismans against the deadly and devastating materialism, which seems to be settling, like a blight, on the world of to-day.

Many will recall a passage of Robert Louis Stevenson in the first chapter of *The Ebb Tide*, the passage about Robert Herrick the beach-comber and his ‘tattered Vergil.’ ‘Certainly,’ writes Stevenson, ‘if money could have been raised upon the book, Robert Herrick would long ago have sacrificed that last possession; but the demand for literature which is so marked a feature in some parts of the South Seas, extends not so far as the dead tongues, and the Vergil which he could not exchange against a meal had often consoled him in his hunger. He would study it, as he lay with tightened belt on the floor of the old calaboose, seeking favourite passages and finding new ones only less beautiful because they lacked the consecration of remembrance. Or he would pause on

¹ *Aen.* i, 204 f.

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random country walks, sit on the path-side, gazing over the sea on the mountains of Eimeo, and dip into the *Aeneid* seeking *sortes*. And if the oracle (as is the way with oracles) replied with no very certain nor encouraging voice, visions of England at least would throng upon the exile's memory: the busy schoolroom, the green playing fields, holidays at home, and the perennial roar of London, and the fireside and the white head of his father. For it is the destiny of those grave, restrained and classic writers, with whom we make enforced and often painful acquaintanceship at school, to pass into the blood and become native in the memory; so that a phrase of Vergil speaks not so much of Mantua or Augustus, but of English places and the student's own irrevocable youth.¹

Many hues are blended to make up this rainbow fascination—grit, faith, earnestness, loyalty, discipline, the spirit and the star of Rome, embodied long before Vergil's time in the work of his spiritual progenitor, the fighting poet Ennius, with his unconquerable soul; the

‘Qui vicit, non est victor nisi victu’ fatetur’

of the struggle against Hannibal, and the

‘Quae neque Dardaniis campis potuere perire,
Nec cum capta capi nec cum combusta cremari’

which spells the passing of Troy—the coming of Rome.

But the predominating idea is the continuity of service, the call of the race. The individual dies, but the state, of which he is just as much a part as his soul (according to Vergil and the Stoics) is an atom or element in the great world-soul, the *Anima mundi*—the state persists,

‘Moribus antiquis stat Res Romana virisque.’

The valour of the past—the mainstay of the present.

‘Serit arbores quae alteri saeclo prosint,’ wrote the old

¹Mr Sidney Irwin in his *Clifton College Addresses* has already cited the words in this connexion, but they will bear repetition: *δὲς καὶ τρὶς τὰ καλά!*

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poet, and out of the phrase springs Vergil's memorable adaptation,

INSERE DAPHNI PIROS CARPENT TVA POMA NEPOTES¹

'Graft, friend, the fruit tree on the wild, your sons' sons then will eat fruit of your giving.' That is the call—that is the clue.

'Westward Ho!' is the slogan of the *Aeneid*,² and the spirit of Vergil seems still to be 'stepping westward.' (1) It was an American—Walt Whitman—who was the first modern poet to take (like Vergil) as the central spring and inspiration of his poetry the glory and praise of the day's work. It is an American who in *The American Era* returns, in prose, to the same theme to-day. Here is a characteristic extract. 'Working is living,' writes Mr Powers, 'just as much as play. To a man who is half a man it is a great deal more so. I know work in all its main varieties, and I know that it is God's best gift to man. No one could rob me so grievously as he who took away my work. No punishment would be so horrible to me as to compel me to spend my time seeking amusement;' and so on to the same effect. That is Aeneas all over. (2) And only last Saturday in *The Spectator*,³ heralded by a fanfare of editorial trumpets, appeared an ecstatic paean or song for American children by the American poet, Mr Vachel Lindsay,—whose visit to Liverpool last winter is still fresh in our memory,—a song to the *Daphnis* of America, 'Johnny Appleseed,' the Pioneer, who in the van of the migration over the Appalachians westward 'in the twenties, thirties and forties of last century' went—'a sort of Rowland of the Wild West,' says *The Spectator*—as if in literal obedience to the call of Vergil, 'singing his songs and planting his apple-orchards, that those who followed him might enjoy the kindly fruits of the earth in due season.' No one who cares to see how a *sors Vergiliana* may germinate and fructify should miss this

¹*Ecl.* ix, 50. ²*Aen.* ii, 781 *alibi*.

³No. 4,847, pp. 651 f. 21, May 1921; *q.v.*

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remarkable poem. America has ways of her own in poetry as in life: but, we all know, she 'gets there'; she 'delivers the goods'! Here are a few lines to show how Mr Lindsay brings out the symbolism of the fruit. The apple-harvest has come.

... 'An angel in each apple,
Great high-schools in each apple,
Great colleges in each apple,
American farms in each apple,
A state-capital in each apple
That touched the forest-mould,
Like scrolls and like bolts of silk
He saw the fruits unfold,
And the boughs bent down with their alchemy.'

Old standards in new latitudes:—so the great crusade goes forward. And the crusader never dies; the life-work of the man is moulded by some mysterious alchemy into the fabric of the community. His spirit becomes incorporate in the spirit of the race. So too, as in the teaching of Pythagoras and the folk-lore of many nations, the very soul, it may be, or souls of the past, the hero or the band of heroes (an Arthur or a Romulus; the great Twin Brethren at the Battle of Lake Regillus; the men of Agincourt in the Retreat from Mons) stream back at the appointed time from exile and purgation across the River of Lethe into the to-day—is it in real presence or by the spiritual standard they have set?—to the rescue of their sons' sons in the hour of need.

'They come transfigured back
Secure from change in their high-hearted ways,
Beautiful evermore, and with the rays
Of morn on their white Shields of Expectation.'

Stat Fortuna domus;—the soul of the Nation, the communion of citizens, the spirit of the people, to which all contribute for good or for evil, infinitesimally and yet appreciably, one and all. The heirloom this and the crown of service, the *Roma Dea*, the *Fortuna Urbis*; national character,

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national tradition, national enthusiasm; a power to move mountains and belonging to all; a great flood to which each puniest wavelet adds nevertheless despite its weakness a momentum of its own;

‘For though the tired waves vainly breaking
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back through creeks and inlets making
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.’

Behind the great leader, the

‘Troïus Aeneas pietate insignis et armis,’¹
[Aeneas] ‘both for piety renowned
And puissant deeds,’²

stand arrayed the Unknown Warriors, the

‘Multi praeterea quos fama obscura recondit;’³
‘Not the great nor well-bespoke,
But the mere uncounted folk,
Of whose life and death is none,
Report or lamentation’;

linked and bound, each to each, by good work and good will, together into one irresistible fellowship of heart and hand, self-sacrifice and mutual service, running, like the tide, a disciplined course, year in year out, from generation to generation, under the lodestar of a great ideal:

TENDEBANTQUE MANVS RIPAE VLTERIORIS AMORE.

When Odysseus in his wanderings holds converse with the dead in the underworld, among the souls of the men ‘killed in action’ before Troy, he sees (you remember) the soul of the great Achilles, sick at heart from durance below and eager to exchange his sceptre in the shades for the sickle or the spade of a day-labourer on earth. What is his consolation? He asks for tidings of the New Age, for tidings of his son: and when Odysseus tells him that Neoptolemus has

¹*Aen.* vi, 403. ²Milton, *P.L.* xii, 321. ³*Aen.* v, 302.

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played the man and has done his day's work well, he is comforted. There you have the Vergilian cry, the watchword of Age to Age:—'Carry on!' 'Speak to the people of Israel that they go forward,' 'on and always on!' so that the souls of the men 'over there' (as the Greeks put it), the men to whom we owe life and liberty, as they lie in the domes of silence, may hear presently the watchman's cry, 'All's well with the race,' and knowing that their sacrifice has not been in vain, may move like the shade of the great Achilles, rejoicing down the meadow of asphodel:

ὡς ἐφάμην, ψυχὴ δὲ ποδώκεος Αἰακίδαο
φοῖτα μακρὰ βιβᾶσα κατ' ἀσφόδελον λειμῶνα
γηθοσύνη, ὃ οἱ υἷὸν ἔφην ἀριδείκετον εἶναι.¹

¹*Odyssey*, xi, 538 ff.

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